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242

DIGITAL
EDITION

SPAWN®



THE
**'DEAD
ZONE'**
IS MINE!

McFARLANE
AFTER GREG
+FCO



PREVIOUSLY IN SPAWN

Marc, Susan and Sara confront Jim, as their concern for his behavior increases, and they find out he knows much more about his past than previously believed. However, by not getting too close to his friends, Jim is protecting them from those after his power.

Taking control of the costume, Jim is able to restore Cog's health, and Cog makes a stunning connection to Jim's wings.

Meanwhile, Bludd and Solomon begin their new partnership, and assess what happened the previous evening at the John Doe Outreach Foundation, but an unexpected visitor may alter their plans.



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Jim Downing (Spawn) – A man whose past is shrouded in mystery, and connected intimately to the very fabric of the Spawn mythos, Jim is the world's newest Hellspawn...and so much more. Having spent years in a deep coma, Jim's main drive is piecing together the fragments of the man he was, in an effort to discover the man he truly is.



Sara Johnston – When Jim woke from his coma (issue #185), Sara was the first person to greet him on the other side of the darkness. A woman of strong faith, Sara's connection to Jim will test her in ways she could never imagine.



Marc Rosen – A would-be reporter-turned-media manager and confidant of Jim Downing, Marc views Jim as his ticket to a better life – though the price for that success may be far greater than Marc knows.



Susan Mathews – Susan is Marc Rosen's girlfriend and a woman with strong abandonment issues. After a tragic suicide, Susan's body now plays host to demon Hel, a spy of Clown's.



Bludd – An old and powerful vampire leader, the true depths of Bludd's history are as yet unknown. In his human guise as the international mogul, Mr. Ramus, Bludd has amassed great wealth and influence. His desire to control Jim Downing and the powers of the K7-Leetha is no secret, and has led to an uneasy partnership between Bludd and Jim – a partnership that is mutually beneficial, and, quite possibly, mutually destructive.



Solomon Pure – The brother of Simon Pure, and leader of a like-minded group of vampires. Solomon makes a deal with Bludd to join forces and merge their armies. However, Solomon has a different end goal than his new partner.



Cagliostro – Once locked in a tower in Hell, the ultimate Hellspawn mentor has mysteriously returned to guide the newest Hellspawn, Jim Downing. However, his motivations are not yet clear, leaving Jim to wonder if Cog can be trusted.



Dead Zone – A celestial safe zone, which neutralizes both agents of Heaven and Hell's powers. Several Dead Zones exist, though few have been revealed. These portals allow Heaven and Hell to place each other's pieces (agents) on the board (Earth), but they're full origin story may alter the game in a way no one's imagined.

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DID YOU
THINK WE WOULD
JUST STAND BY AND
LET YOU TAKE
WHATEVER YOU
WANTED?

WITHOUT
A FIGHT?
OR ANY
BLOOD
SHED?





I WOULD HAVE THOUGHT BETTER OF THOSE WHO CLAIM TO BE OF 'THE OLD GUARD.'



OH.... WE KNEW THERE'D BE A FIGHT. WE WERE JUST HOPING GOD WOULD HAVE MADE IT MORE OF A CHALLENGE THAN SENDING YOU.



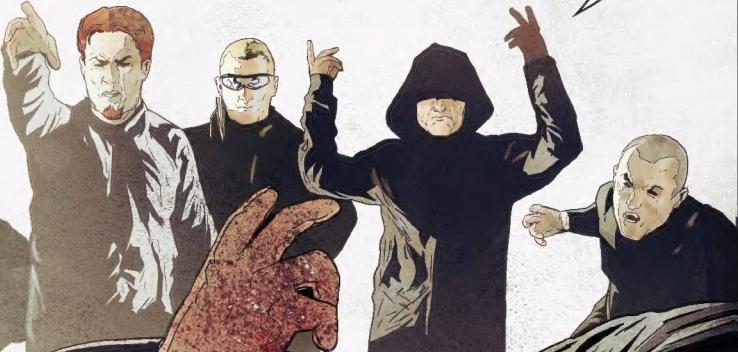
GOD DIDN'T SEND ME. YOUR SIDE DID.

BUT THAT ARROGANCE IS WHY YOUR KIND HAS BEEN SO EASILY SLAUGHTERED OVER THE CENTURIES.

SLAUGHTERED?

WE TORE A PATH THROUGH THE LAST ARMY OF ANGELS THAT CAME OUR WAY. YOU MAY WANT TO ASK WHY YOUR FEMALES SUDDENLY DISAPPEARED. THE FEAR IN THEIR FACES WAS A MARVEL TO BEHOLD! AND IF THEY COULDN'T STOP US-- IMAGINE WHAT'S GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOU.

ALRIGHT, BOYS... CIRCLE HIM.





I USUALLY DON'T DO THIS... BUT WE'RE GOING TO GIVE YOU A CHOICE. EITHER YOU LAY DOWN YOUR SWORD AND PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO HELL BEFORE WE KILL YOU-- OR I MAKE SURE GOD KNOWS YOU FAILED TO PROTECT HIS ENTRANCE TO THE 'DEAD ZONE.' HE'LL BANISH YOU TO HELL FOR THAT!



EITHER WAY YOU'RE OURS! SO TAKE YOUR PICK.





YOU'RE NOT
LISTENING!

GOD
DIDN'T
SEND
ME!

OUR BOSS WILL
BE DISAPPOINTED.
YOU'VE DENIED HIS
REQUEST.*

BECAUSE WHETHER
YOU WANT TO ACCEPT IT OR
NOT-- FACTIONS ARE BEGINNING TO
SPLIT IN BOTH CELESTIAL CAMPS. HELL
WILL FIGURE OUT YOU'VE BETRAYED
HER AND HEAVEN WILL NO LONGER
SHIELD YOUR ACTIONS.

YOU'LL BE CUT
OFF FROM BOTH. AND
AFTER ALL THE CENTURIES YOU
TRIED BUILDING A HAVEN FOR
YOUR PEOPLE-- THAT'LL ALL
BE AT RISK. NEITHER SIDE
WILL TRUST YOU.

THAT
WOULD
TRULY BE A
SHAME.

*Last Issue-- TODD



AWW... SO NOW ALL
OF A SUDDEN YOU GIVE A SHIT
WHAT HAPPENS TO ME? INTERESTING...
SEE, I THOUGHT THE ONLY REASON YOU
WORKED FOR GIBBONS WAS BECAUSE YOU
FAILED TO MAKE THE CUT INTO GOD'S BATTALION.
WHAT WAS IT I HEARD? OH, THAT'S RIGHT...
YOU ALBINOS COULDN'T STOMACH BEING
IN THE LINE OF FIRE. DIDN'T WANT TO
GET YOUR HANDS DIRTY. YOU WERE
TOO FAR ABOVE ALL THAT
HOLY WAR B.S.



SEE, WHAT
YOU GENTLEMEN DON'T
WANT TO ACCEPT IS THAT
YOU WERE HIRED TO BE
ASSISTANTS. BUT YOUR
BOSS MADE ME HIS
PARTNER.

AND I'M SURE
HE'S TOLD YOU THAT
IF YOU WERE TO EVEN
LIFT A FINGER TOWARDS
ME RIGHT NOW... IT'D BE
THE LAST THING YOU'D
EVER DO.

AND I'M ALSO
SURE MR. GIBBONS
KNOWS THAT I'D RATHER
DIE TRYING TO KILL HIS
FAMILY, THAN FOR HIM TO
TREAT ME LIKE I'M ONE OF
HIS ALBINO DOGS. SO
YOU MAKE IT AS CLEAR
AS YOU CAN TO
HIM...





EVERY SPECK.



"SO IT'S POETIC
IT'S THEIR BLOOD
DESECUTING THAT
HOLY SPOT."

"IN THE MEANTIME, WE'LL GET
ANOTHER CHANCE TO BREACH
THE PORTAL. WE JUST NEED TO
WAIT THIS ONE OUT."

DELIVER MY OFFER TO GIBBONS. TELL HIM HE HAS TWENTY FOUR HOURS. I DON'T HEAR FROM HIM BEFORE THEN--I'LL ASSUME THE WORST.

AND DEAL WITH HIM LIKE I DO MY OTHER ENEMIES.

KRUNCH.

UNDER-STOOD.

WE'LL DO OUR PART TO MAKE SURE YOUR PATH IS AS CLEAR AS POSSIBLE. THE LESS INTERFERENCE YOU HAVE, THE BETTER.

I HEARD
WHAT YOU SAID
TO THEM, BLUDD.
IT'S A PITY YOU'RE
TAKING THEIR
SIDE THROUGH
ALL THIS.

THEY'RE
JUST A
MEANS TO AN
END. NOTHING
MORE.

DOESN'T MATTER.
YOU MADE THE DEAL.
THAT PUTS YOU IN THEIR
CAMP. AND I WONDER HOW
THEY'RE GOING TO FEEL
WHEN THEY FIND OUT YOU'VE
RECRUITED SOLOMON? HE
DOESN'T CARE ABOUT ANY
OF YOUR AGENDAS. IN
FACT, I'D WATCH MY BACK
AROUND HIM IF I
WERE YOU.

YOU HAVE
SOMETHING
TO SAY?

I DO.

YOU'RE CHASING THE
WRONG THING. DOWNTON
SHOULD BE YOUR TARGET, NOT
HEAVEN. WITHOUT HIM YOU WON'T
GET ANYWHERE. AND IF YOU
TRY USING THAT 'DEAD ZONE'--
YOU'LL ONLY SCREW IT UP
FOR THE REST OF US.

I DON'T
CARE!

I'M
SURE
YOU
DON'T.

BUT YOU WANT
TO KNOW WHAT BUGS
ME THE MOST? WE
COULD'VE MADE A GREAT
TEAM. MY DEMONS AND
YOUR VAMPIRES... WE
WOULD'VE BEEN
UNSTOPPABLE.



I ASKED FOR
YOUR HELP BECAUSE I
NEEDED IT. YOU, ON THE OTHER
HAND, THINK YOU CAN GO AT IT
ALONE. YOU CAN'T. AND SOLOMON
ISN'T GOING TO HELP YOU. HE'S A
PUNK-ASS. SO YOU WANT TO GO
ROGUE ON THIS, THAT'S
YOUR CHOICE.



BUT YOU
HAD TO KNOW I'D
PROTECT MY
INTERESTS TOO.

YOU'RE
UNSTABLE
EMOTIONALLY--
THAT'S WHAT
COST YOU MY
TRUST.



THOUGH
I'M SURE
I'M NOT THE
FIRST TO SAY
THAT.

YOU
AREN'T.

BUT THE THING
THAT SURPRISES ME THE
MOST IS HOW MANY OF YOU
THINK YOU'RE THE ONE THAT'S
GOING TO FIGURE THIS WHOLE
THING OUT. NEVER MIND THAT NO
VAMPIRE HAS EVER SAT ON HELL'S
THRONE. GUYS LIKE YOU ALWAYS
THINK YOU'RE SPECIAL AND
THE RULES DON'T APPLY
TO YOU.

WHAT
MAKES YOU SO
DISAPPOINTING
IS YOU'RE
SUPPOSED TO
BE THE 'SMART
ONE.'



SILLY
ME FOR
THINKING
THAT WAS
TRUE.

SO... YOU WANT
TO KEEP DOWNING
ALL TO YOURSELF? HAVE
AT IT. IT DOESN'T MEAN YOU
OWN THE 'DEAD ZONE.' TO
PROVE IT I INVITED A GUEST OF
MINE, WHO'S HERE RIGHT NOW.
YOU SHOULD GO CHECK
DOWNSTAIRS. I THINK HE'S
LEFT YOU A BUNCH
OF GIFTS.



REDEEMER!
ENOUGH!

NICE
MESS.



YOU'VE
PROVEN YOUR
POINT. YOU'RE NOT
THE ONLY ONE WHO'S
GROWN DISSATISFIED
WITH GOD'S
LEADERSHIP.

WE'VE ALL
FELT HIS OPPRESSION
AT SOME POINT. THE
LORD USED TO LISTEN TO
OUR BOSS' ADVICE, BUT
NO LONGER.. WHICH
UNFORTUNATELY FORCED
HIS HAND TO MAKE A
FEW SIDE DEALS.



YOUR
PRESENCE
HERE TELLS ME
YOU MUST'VE
DONE THE SAME.
WE'RE DEALING
WITH BLUDD AND
WE DON'T TRUST
HIM. WHO'S
YOUR GUY?

CLOWN.



FOR
SURE YOU
CAN'T TRUST
HIM. SO, WHY
DON'T WE LEAVE
AND HAVE A
DISCUSSION
THAT MIGHT BE
MORE MUTUALLY
BENEFICIAL
FOR BOTH
OF US.



I DON'T
KNOW WHY
WE'D WANT
TO SLUM WITH
THE DEMONS
ANYWAY.





THERE'S DOZENS OF QUESTIONS I WONDER ABOUT. AND I HATE MYSELF FOR NOT BEING ABLE TO JUST ACCEPT EVERYTHING THAT'S GOING ON. THEN TO ADD TO ALL OF IT, I'VE BEEN STRUGGLING WITH MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. I KEEP PRAYING HE'LL GIVE ME INSIGHT TO WHAT HIS PLANS ARE FOR THE BOTH OF US. BUT I CAN'T HEAR HIS VOICE. IT'S LIKE... LIKE HE'S LEFT ME. AND IF THAT'S TRUE, YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE LEFT THAT I CAN COUNT ON.

THAT'S NOT TRUE, YOU HAVE JUDY.

YOU'RE RIGHT, BUT IT'S NOT THE SAME THING.



WHAT CONFUSES ME IS HOW YOU CAN BE SO... AMAZING AT TIMES. LIKE YOU ARE ON TV OR HOW YOU HELP SO MANY OTHERS-- AND I KNOW IT'S SELFISH-- BUT I KEEP WANTING YOU TO BE LIKE THAT WITH ME. I DON'T WANT THE DARK STUFF. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

WOW... UM... THATS... I DON'T KNOW. I'M STILL PUTTING THINGS TOGETHER.

I KNOW YOU ARE. THAT'S MY PROBLEM. YOU'RE DEALING WITH YOUR POWERS AND YOUR PAST AND THE MEDIA AND ALL OF IT-- AND YOU'VE BEEN DOING GREAT, BUT... REMEMBER WHEN YOU SAVED ME FROM THOSE PHOTOGRAPHERS AT THAT DINER?

YEAH... WHAT ALLOWS YOU TO DO WHAT YOU DID?

YOU MEAN TAKE YOU FROM THE ALLEY TO YOUR APARTMENT?*

YOU TRANS- PORTED US! THAT SHOULD BE SOMETHING WONDERFUL. I MEAN TO BE ABLE TO 'TIME TRAVEL' OR WHATEVER, THAT SHOULD BE AWESOME, BUT... I... WE...

WE WENT THROUGH THE 'DARKNESS'.

YES. AND I KNOW IT ONLY LASTED A SECOND, BUT I'VE NEVER BEEN SO SCARED IN ALL MY LIFE, AND SINCE THEN I HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO SLEEP. AND I KEEP THINKING I HEAR WHISPERS CALLING ME AND SHADOWS MOVING. AND IT ALL STARTED THAT NIGHT. I NEED TO KNOW WHY.

YOU STILL FEEL IT?



* Issue 204 -- TODD

I DO. EVEN WHEN I'M AWAKE, AND IT'S NOT DARKNESS-- IT'S SOME KIND OF EVIL. DOES THAT MAKE SENSE?

IT MAY. I STILL DON'T KNOW WHERE MY POWER COMES FROM.

IS IT POSSIBLE... NO! NEVER MIND! WHAT? TELL ME.



IS IT POSSIBLE YOUR POWERS AREN'T FROM GOD? MAYBE THAT'S WHY THE VATICAN IS INTERESTED IN YOU. NOT BECAUSE THEY THINK YOU'RE SOME KIND OF MIRACLE, BUT BECAUSE THEY SEE YOU AS A THREAT.

IT'S CROSSED MY MIND.

WHAT ABOUT YOUR DOCTORS? WHAT DO THEY SAY?

IT'S BEYOND THEM. THEY DON'T HAVE ANY MORE ANSWERS THAN YOU OR I. THAT'S WHY I'VE BEEN SO DISTANT. I'VE BEEN SO WRAPPED UP TRYING TO SORT THROUGH MY PROBLEMS, I NEVER STOPPED TO ASK IF ALL THIS WAS TAKING A TOLL ON YOU TOO.

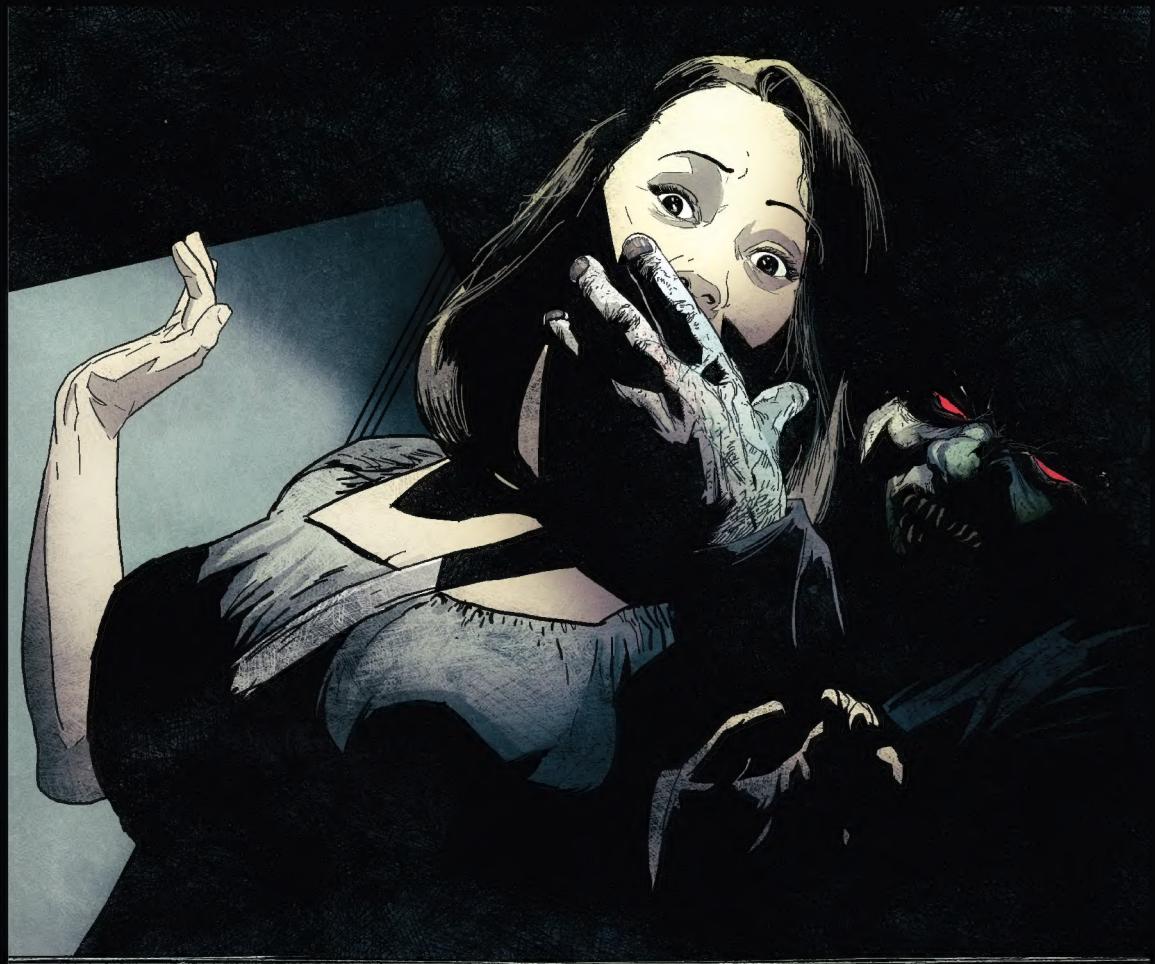












TO BE CONTINUED...





EMPIRE